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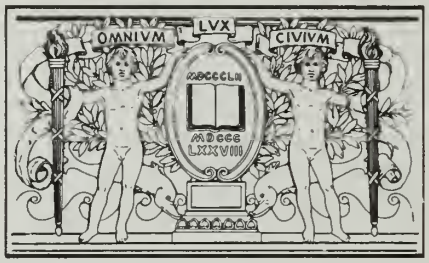


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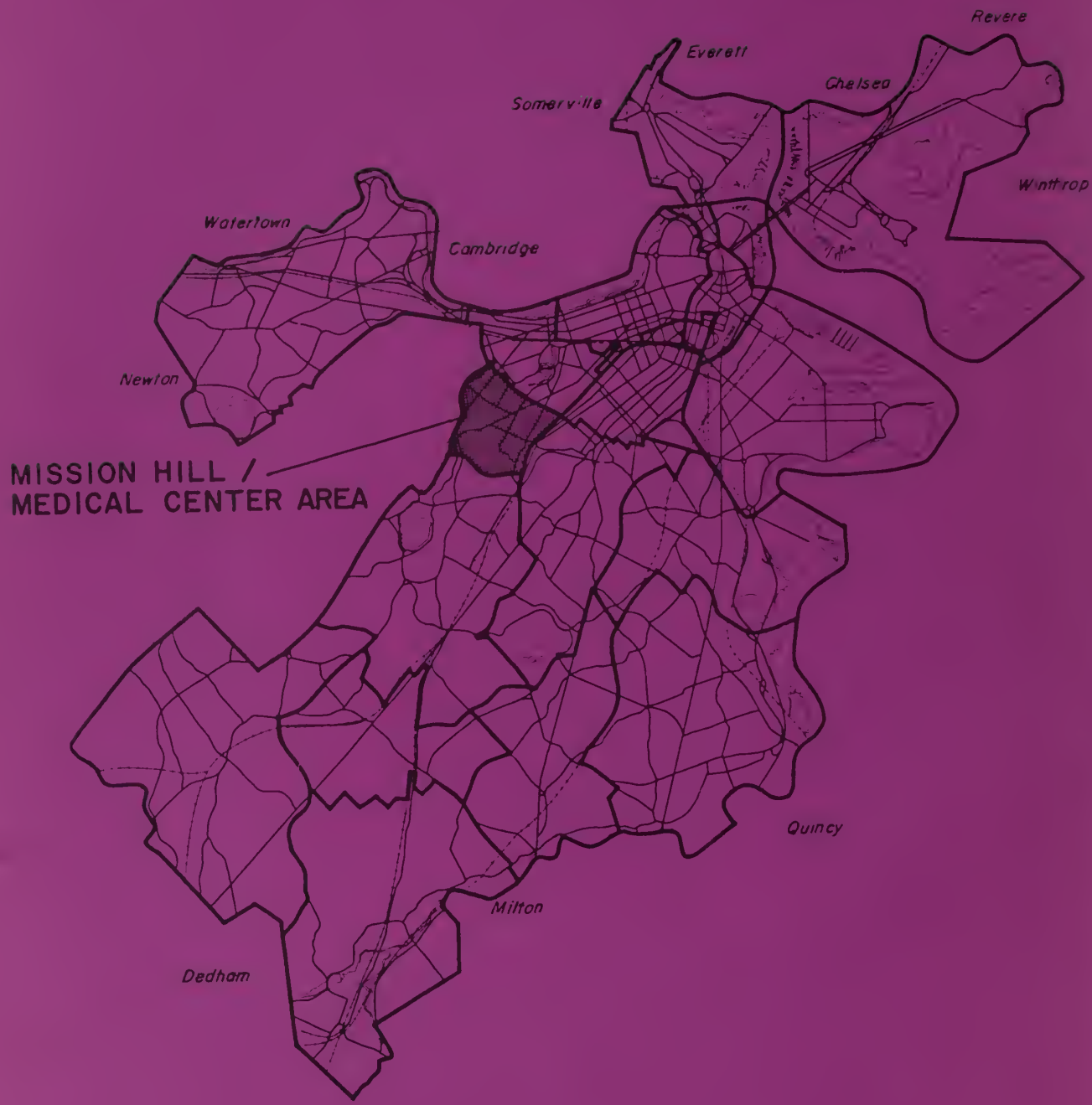
# Mission Hill/ Medical Center Area

## District Profile & Proposed 1978-1980 Neighborhood Improvement Program

City of Boston
Kevin H. White, Mayor
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Neighborhood Planning Program
Summer, 1977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The Boston Redevelopment Authority's Neighborhood Planning Program has prepared this report to assist residents and City agencies develop longer range solutions to community-wide planning issues.

This "Neighborhood Profile" contains information which helps bring into sharp focus those matters which are of concern to residents of each neighborhood in the City. This information facilitates public understanding and assists all of us--both at City Hall and in the neighborhood--in determining how we can best use the resources available to us.

I hope this booklet serves as an important building block to encourage greater interest in the problems confronting this neighborhood and our City and help us all in developing solutions to these problems.

Kevin H. White
Mayor

The Boston Redevelopment Authority, as the City planning agency, is pleased to submit for neighborhood review a profile of Mission Hill/Medical Center Area.

It is my hope that the profile can serve as a starting point in the dialogue that should and must take place between neighborhood residents and public officials as decisions are made about the use of community development funds and other matters of public policy.

The decision-making process, of course, must be based on data that is up-to-date and accurate. I am confident that the material contained in this report can be of great assistance to all who care about this neighborhood in particular and the city as a whole.

Questions and comments about the material in the report should be directed to the Neighborhood Planning staff of the BRA.

Robert F. Walsh
Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority

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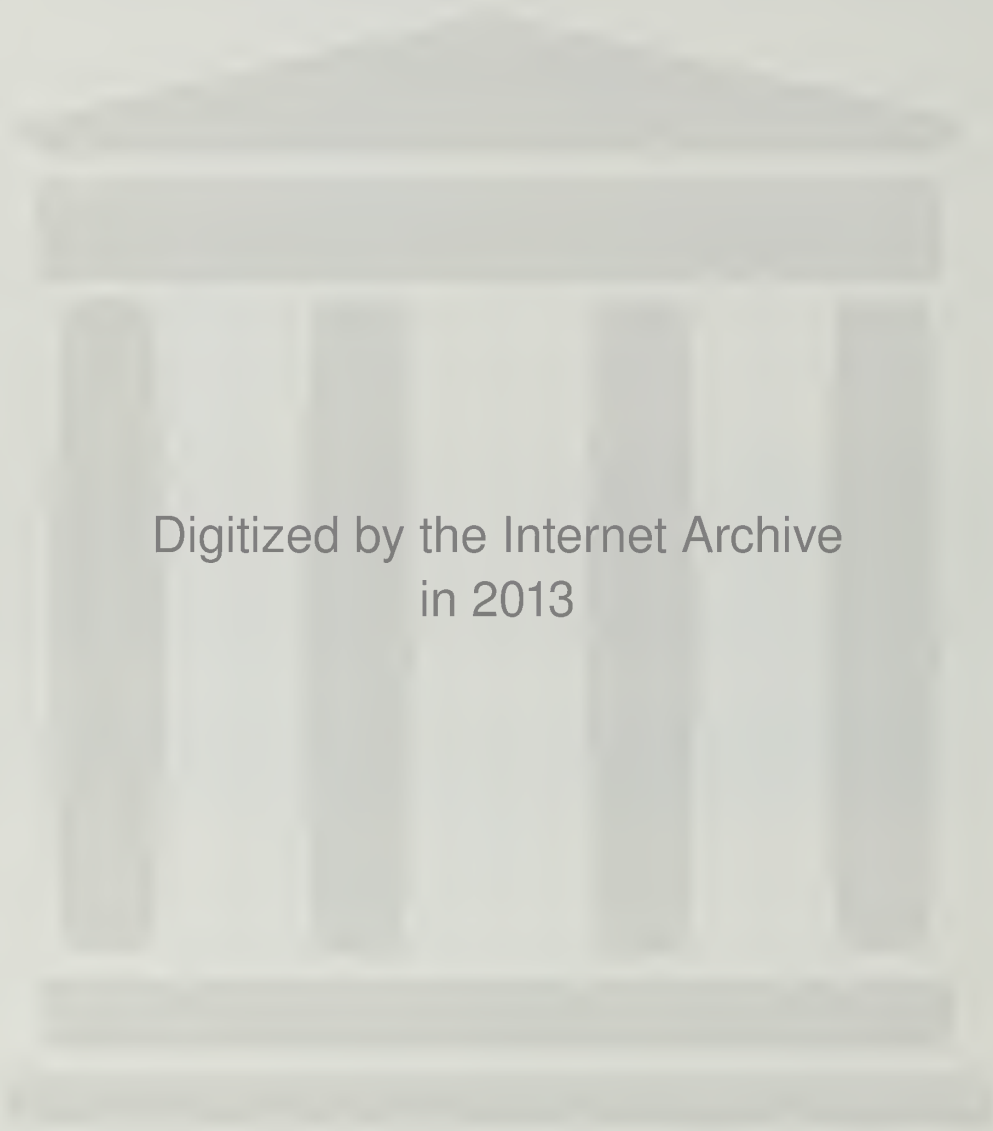
This planning report, prepared by the Mission Hill/Medical Center Area Neighborhood Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials in defining the needs of, and programs for the Mission Hill/ Medical Center Area. It is also written to provide prospective residents and investors with an analysis of current issues facing the community; the report does not describe the positive attributes of the neighborhood.

The report includes background information, a discussion of major community planning and development issues and recommended strategies and is intended to aid in the establishment of a long-range framework for decision making by the public and private sectors.



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# 1. BACKGROUND



## A. NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Mission Hill, once part of the town of Roxbury, was annexed to Boston in 1867. The earliest settlements were farm estates dating from the Colonial period and they determined the character of the area until the 1860's. In the period from 1860-1880 streetcar service and sewage systems were extended to Mission Hill and induced the first major increase in population. Scattered housing was built on the slopes of the Hill and German families who worked in the local breweries settled around the base of the Hill. Mission Church was founded in 1869 and the existing stone church was constructed in 1878 to replace the original wooden building.

From 1885 to 1895 Mission Hill experienced a building boom that involved the construction of a large number of low cost frame houses. During this decade, new streets opened and public transportation shifted from the horse drawn car to an electric car line, which by 1894, was in operation along Huntington Avenue and in 1899 extended along Brookline Avenue. By the end of the century, Mission Hill had become a homogeneous Irish-Catholic community.

Before 1900, the Convent (House of Good Shepherd), New England Baptist Hospital and the Martin School were the major institutional uses in Mission Hill. After 1900, institutions moved from their downtown locations to the Misssion Hill/Medical Center Area due to their need for larger facilities and because of the availability of low priced vacant land accessible to public transportation. In the period from 1905-1926, the great majority of medical and educational institutions in the area completed their initial construction with most of the hospitals being built on the 26 acre site Harvard purchased from the Francis estate.

From 1926 until the present, Mission Hill has experienced extensive institutional construction and limited residential construction. The Medical Center Area has undergone a continuous expansion of medical and educational facilities with the predominant mode being an increase in density on already established sites but with some expansion involving the demolition of residential buildings and the use of other non-institutional property. Residential development, on the other hand, has been limited and concentrated in three major areas: (1) Mission Hill Main and Extension; public housing projects completed in 1940 and 1952 and containing 1,611 units; (2) Whitney Redevelopment Project (Charlesbank Apartments, Back Bay Manor and Franklin Square Apartments), Mission Hill's only redevelopment project, completed in 1965 and containing 600 non-subsidized units and (3) Mission Park, a publicly subsidized mixed income project containing 775 units and still under construction.

## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

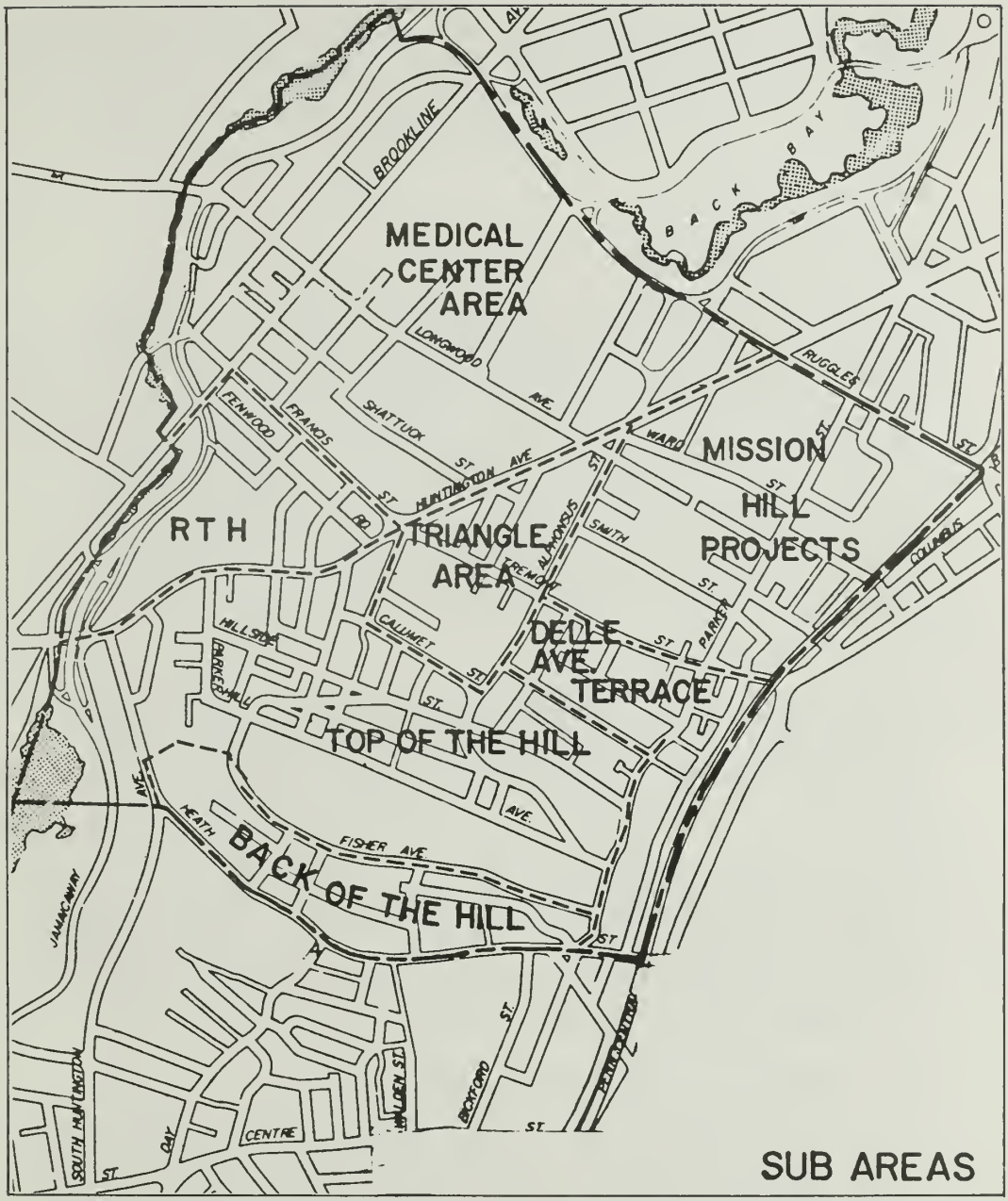
2 Information on population, income and housing in this report is derived from the 1970 U.S. Census. The 1970 data for Mission Hill is available on a sub-area basis and for purposes of analysis, seven sub-areas have been designated as shown on the sub-area maps. These sub-areas conform in general to Mission Hill Planning Commission and local neighborhood association boundaries, but vary in some instances to conform to Census boundaries for purposes of data analysis.

The composition of people in Mission Hill has shifted in the last 20 years from a closely knit, Irish Catholic, family residential neighborhood to a heterogeneous community of 21,000 people. It is now a multi-ethnic community that in 1970 was 76% White, 17% Black and 7% Hispanic. However, over half of the Mission Hill families below poverty level, 70% of the Black population and 52% of the Hispanic population, are in the Mission Hill Projects area which contains only 25% of Mission Hill's total population. From 1970-1976, both Mission Hill and the City experienced a slight decrease in total population. Mission Hill is housing an increasing number of students and young professionals; a 1972 market study conducted by Robert Gladstone and Associates indicated that demand for housing is found in all price ranges and all income levels in Mission Hill. Specifically, there is a demand for smaller units created by student growth in the area and a demand by an increasing number of professionals (such as physicians and professors), many of whom desire to reside as close to their work as possible. A 1974 survey by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (excluding units in the Mission Hill Projects) found that 70% of the housing units were in good condition with minor repairs required, 25% were in fair condition with moderate repairs required and the remaining 5% in poor condition.

While Mission Hill contains the largest concentration of medical and educational institutions in the City, most of the employees reside outside the district and the median family income in Mission Hill is $8,400 and is below the City-wide median of $9,133.

### 1. Back of the Hill

The Back of the Hill is a residential area of approximately 540 people. In 1970, the population was 84% White, 14% Black, and 2% Hispanic. The housing stock is predominantly two and three family frame dwellings (96%) with only 3% of the stock in single family homes. The area includes over 20 acres of vacant land, primarily owned by Lahey Clinic and the Ruggles Baptist Church. Over the past ten years, approximately 150 housing units have been removed by these institutions. Typically, residential buildings were acquired, no major investments made, and demolished as soon as they became vacant or uninhabitable. Redevelopment of this vacant land




and preservation of the existing residential structures are major concerns of the City and neighborhood residents. Other issues of concern are institutional traffic and parking and the poor condition of the Bromley-Heath housing project.

2. Delle Avenue/Terrace

The Delle Avenue/Terrace neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 1,200 people but also contains the majority of Mission Hill's manufacturing and industrial uses. In 1970, the population was 59% White, 17% Black and 24% Hispanic. The

housing stock is primarily (76%) two and three family wood-frame structures with 17% of the stock in single family structures. The neighborhood will be impacted by the relocation of the Orange Line and the proposed station at Roxbury Crossing. Other issues of concern are housing problems, industrial blight and reuse of the vacant land in the Southwest Corridor.

3. Medical Center Area

The Medical Center Area's land use is almost exclusively devoted to hospital and educational institutions. In 1970, the population was approximately 4,800 and was 97% White and 3% Black. In 1970, the area had about 76 residential structures, only 12% of which were owner-occupied. The Medical Center Area is also contained within the Fenway Urban Renewal Area. The institutional use of this area has significantly impacted Mission Hill's residential neighborhoods; a major concern of the City and the neighborhood is the need for adequate and effective control of institutional expansion.

4. Mission Hill Projects

The Mission Hill Projects area contains the Mission Hill Main and Mission Hill Extension public housing projects, other residential structures and some industrial uses. In 1970, the population was 5,138 and was 38% White, 48% Black and 14% Hispanic. The two public housing projects contain over half the structures in the area and over three-fourths of the units. The poor condition of the projects is a major concern in the area and in Mission Hill as a whole. Other concerns focus on the impact of the Orange Line relocation and proposed stations at Roxbury Crossing and Ruggles Street and on industrial and insitutional use of land.

5. The Roxbury Tenants of Harvard (RTH)

The RTH neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 1,600 people. In 1970, the population was 84% White, 11% Black and 5% Hispanic. The housing stock is primarily two and three family woodframe structures with 1% of the stock in single family structures and about 25% of the stock in masonry multi-family structures. This is an area where institutional landbanking occurred in order to accommodate future expansion. The RTH group, composed of tenants in Harvard owned buildings, organized during the 1960's to challenge the expansion plans of Harvard University and the Affiliated Hospitals Center. RTH subsequently elicited Harvard sponsorship for the exterior rehabilitation of the two and three family homes along Francis Street and Fenwood Road and is currently seeking a means of acquiring and rehabilitating

these structures. RTH is also a co-sponsor with Harvard of 775 units of publicly subsidized mixed income housing on the old Convent site. This project includes a below grade parking garage which will be operated by the Medical Area Service Corporation (MASCO).

6. The Triangle Area

The Triangle Area is a residential neighborhood of approximately 1,500 people. In 1970 the population was 88% White, 7% Black, and 5% Hispanic. The housing stock is primarily (75%) two and three family structures with 17% of the stock comprised of one family structures. Residents of the 668 units in the three high rise structures along St. Alphonsus Street are more transient than the rest of the neighborhood and constitute a distinct segment of the community. This neighborhood has the highest owner-occupancy rate (74%) in Mission Hill. This area, as well as the RTH neighborhood, is one of the residential neighborhoods most heavily impacted by institutional use and expansion in the Medical Center Area. Although the medical institutions have pledged not to expand on the eastern side of Huntington Avenue, previous years have seen conversion of residential units to institutional uses and the neighborhood still suffers under heavy institutional traffic and parking as well as traffic and parking and associated with the Brigham Circle business district.

7. Top of the Hill

Top of the Hill is a residential neighborhood of approximately 5,800 people. In 1970, the population was 90% White, 6% Black and 4% Hispanic. The housing stock is primarily (77%) two and three family woodframe single family structures. The New England Baptist Hospital (NEBH) and the Robert Breck Brigham Hospital (RBBH) are the major institutional uses within this neighborhood. There is concern about the expansion plans of NEBH; although NEBH's Certificate of Need application has been denied by the Public Health Council, NEBH is still seeking other means to allow construction of a new facility on the top of the hill. Other issues of concern in the neighborhood are residential disinvestment, inadequate water pressure and traffic congestion and parking attributed to employees, patients and visitors to NEBH and RBBH.

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS/MISSION HILL/MEDICAL CENTER AREA

| | Total Pop. 1970 | Black Pop. 1970 | Hispanic Pop. 1970 | 65 & Over Pop. 1970 | Total Resid. Struc. 1970 | Owner Occupied Struct. 1970 | Median Family Income 1970 | %Families Below Poverty Level 1970 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Back of the Hill | 537 | 73 (13.6%) | 13 ( 2.4%) | 39 ( 7.3%) | 75 | 27 (36.0%) | $ 8,400 | 9% |
| Delle Ave/ Terrace | 1,151 | 198 (17.2%) | 271 (23.5%) | 137 (11.9%) | 163 | 64 (39.3%) | $ 7,500 | 18% |
| Medical Center Area | 4,872 | 145 ( 3.0%) | 0 | 298 ( 6.1%) | 76 | 9 (11.8%) | - | - |
| Mission Hill Projects | 5,138 | 2,474 (48.2%) | 738 (14.4%) | 572 (11.1%) | 210 | 39 (18.6%) | $ 4,500 | 37% |
| RTH | 1,607 | 171 (10.6%) | 76 ( 4.7%) | 200 (12.4%) | 152 | 5 ( 3.0%) | $ 8,400 | 8% |
| Triangle Area | 1,466 | 106 ( 7.2%) | 78 ( 5.3%) | 163 (11.1%) | 104 | 77 (74.0%) | $11,500 | 5% |
| Top of the Hill | 5,782 | 367 ( 6.3%) | 248 ( 4.3%) | 810 (14.0%) | 493 | 315 (63.9%) | $ 8,400 | 8% |
| District | 20,553 | 3,534 (17.2%) | 1,424 ( 6.9%) | 2,219 (10.8%) | 1,273 | 536 (42.1%) | $ 8,400 | |
| City | 641,071 | 104,206 (16.3%) | 17,984 ( 2.8%) | 81,718 (12.7%) | 80,700 | 58,100 (72.0%) | $ 9,133 | |

## C. PAST MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT (1968-1976)

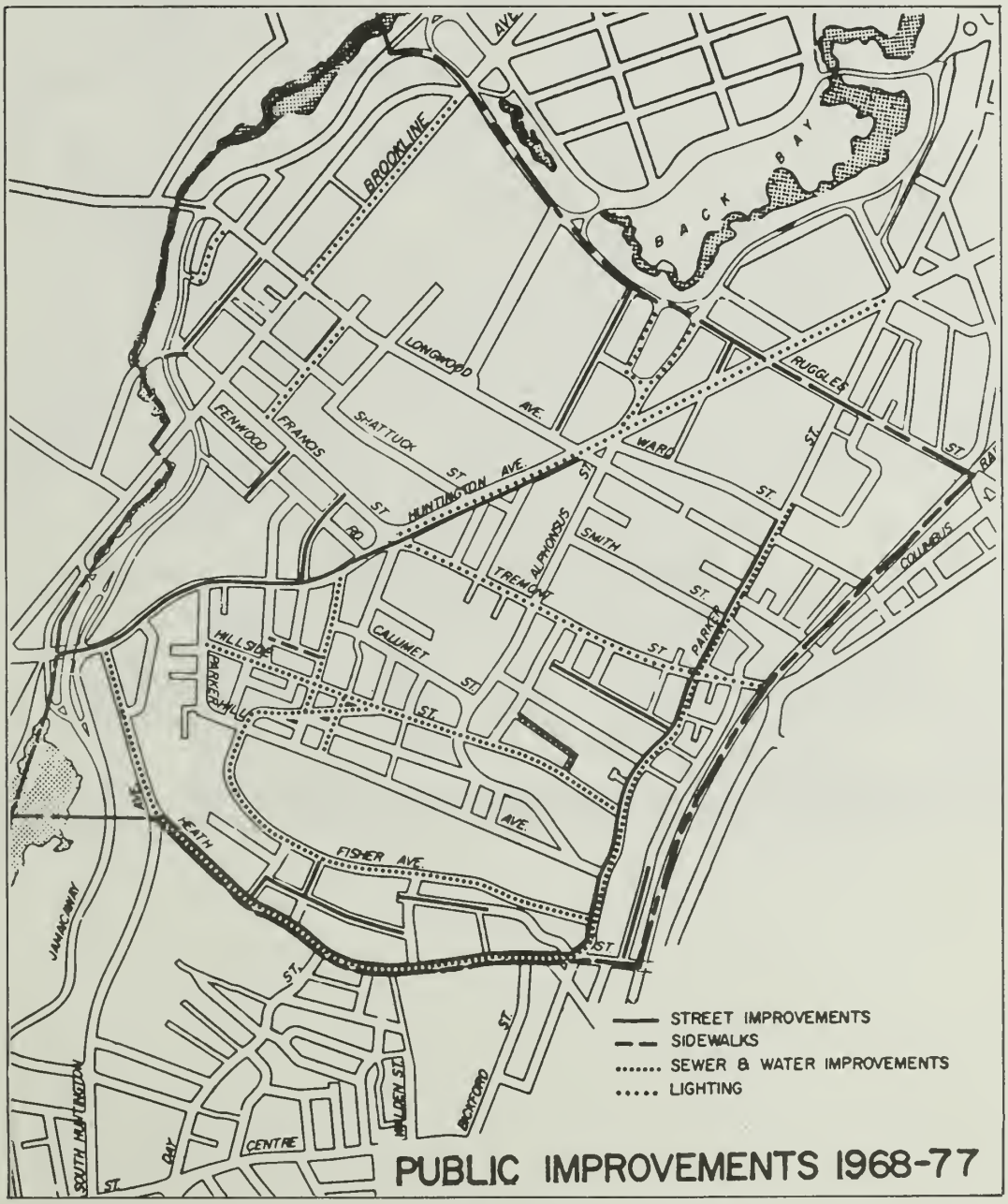
Since 1968, the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction and renovation of community facilities and parks, reconstruction of streets, and replacement of sewer and water lines. The City renovated the Community Recreation Building at 68A Annunciation Road in the Mission Hill Extension and constructed the Perez Playground in Mission Hill Main. The City also expended funds for the renovation of playground facilities at McLaughlin and Mission Hill playgrounds (See Public Facilities map). During the same period, there were over 2½ miles of street and sidewalk reconstruction, 3 miles of sewer and water line improvements and almost 2 miles of lighting improvements (see Public Improvements map).

In the housing area, the Mission Hill Public Housing Projects received almost $2.5 million in 1975 and 1976 for renovations and security improvements. Since its inception, the Housing Improvement Program has encouraged the private rehabilitation of over 40 homes in the district. This program has been useful in the preservation of Mission Hill's housing stock by offering cash rebates to homeowners who complete certain home improvements.

The Neighborhood Housing Services has been allocated $140,000 in City funds as a match for Federal funds for its revolving loan fund for housing improvements in Mission Hill; NHS has provided loans totaling $114,000 to 18 homeowners in Mission Hill since May 1975.

Under the Neighborhood Business Services program, a foot patrolman has been provided in Brigham Circle for the past three years.

Under the Human Services program, an elderly van operating out of the Hennigan Community School has been provided for the past three years.



BROOKLINE
BACK BAY
LONGWOOD AVE.
RUGGLES ST.
FENWOOD RD.
FRANCIS ST.
SHATTUCK ST.
HUNTINGTON AVE.
WARD ST.
ALPHONSUS ST.
TREMONT ST.
SMITH ST.
COLUMBUS
HILLSIDE
PARKER HILL
CALUMET ST.
PARKER ST.
HEATH ST.
FISHER AVE.
JAMAICAWAY
SOUTH HUNTINGTON AVE.
CENTRE ST.
BOWDOIN ST.
BOYLSTON ST.
DORCHESTER
MISSION PARK
775 UNITS MIXED INCOME SEC 8 SUBSIDIZE
BREAKTHROUGH REHAB
DISTRICT WIDE
HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
DEMOLITION PROGRAM
BOARDING PROGRAM
NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES
HOUSING PROGRAM 1968-1977

PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-1977

BROOKLINE
BACK BAY
LONGWOOD AVE.
RUGGLES ST.
FENWOOD RD.
FRANCIS ST.
SHATTUCK ST.
HUNTINGTON AVE.
WARD ST.
SMITH ST.
TREMONT ST.
ALPHONSUS ST.
COLUMBUS AVE.
PARK ST.
CALUMET ST.
HILLSIDE ST.
FISHER AVE.
HEATH ST.
JAMAICWAY
SOUTH HUNTINGTON AVE.
CENTRE ST.
BOYLSTON ST.
BRADFORD ST.
HALDEN ST.
• • • STREET LIGHTING
— STREET RECONSTRUCTION
- - SIDEWALK RECONSTRUCTION
▲ POLICE FOOTPATROL
⬢ ELDERLY VAN
DISTRICT WIDE
20% HIP
40% HIP
50% HIP
NHS
DEMOLITION OF VACANT BUILDINGS
BOARDING OF VACANT BUILDINGS
1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

## D. 1977 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The 1977 Neighborhood Improvement Program focuses on four main areas: housing, neighborhood business districts, capital improvements and human services. Particular emphasis is placed on the preservation and rehabilitation of the neighborhood's housing stock. The Housing Improvement Program is funded at $60,000 and, for the first time, three rebate programs will be extended to all of Mission Hill. The regular 20% rebate program will continue, a 40% rebate for replacement of defective systems or repair of major structural defects will be introduced and a 50% rebate will be available to elderly homeowners. The Neighborhood Housing Services Program will receive a matching grant from City funds for the third straight year. Funds are also budgeted for demolition of abandoned, unsafe and dangerous buildings and boarding of vacant buildings for future rehabilitation.

Public investments in Brigham Circle funded in previous years will be reinforced with the continuation of the police footpatrol. Human services funding consists of the continuation of the elderly van, operating from the Hennigan School, with further revisions as necessary to respond directly to Mission Hill's needs.

Capital improvements will consist of street lighting along Delle Avenue and Calumet Street, reconstruction of Eldora Street and Shepherd Avenue, sidewalk reconstruction along Parker Hill Avenue, Darling Street and Fisher Avenue, and street trees which will be planted throughout the residential area.

Preliminary approval of the following Round II Public Works Bill project has been received and implementation is expected during this fiscal year: $630,000 for vacant unit rehab at the Mission Hill Projects.

# 2. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES (Mid and Long-Range)

## A. RESIDENTIAL DISINVESTMENT

### Issue

Mission Hill has traditionally been a family residential area with strong neighborhood ties. At present, however, there are many complex and inter-related factors which, in various combinations, contribute to the deterioration of the housing stock and threaten the stability of some residential neighborhoods. These areas have experienced a process in which owners have suffered a loss of confidence and have reduced ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation expenditures so that a significant deterioration in the quality of the housing stock has occurred.

Some of the factors which contribute to this residential disinvestment are:

1. Income Cost Squeeze: Operating costs often go up faster than income and, in combination with high taxes and modest rents, restrict the funds available for maintenance or fix-up.

2. Restrictions On Availability Of Mortgages and Home Improvement Loans: In portions of Mission Hill, it has been difficult for some homeowners or potential buyers to obtain a mortgage or home improvement loan. When loans are made, they may involve higher interest rates, higher down payments and shorter maturities than those made in suburban areas. Concerns are also being raised about the difficulty of obtaining homeowner's insurance or the need to pay higher premiums or being assigned to a high risk pool.

3. Absentee Landlords: In general, absentee-owned structures in Mission Hill are in worse condition than owner-occupied structures in the same neighborhood. Many factors make absentee-owned structures particularly susceptible to disinvestment and a concentration of absentee-owned buildings provides the opportunity for an acceleration of the deterioration of the housing stock. Mission Hill is particularly susceptible since its owner occupancy rate is low.

4. Fear Of Crime and Social Change: Fear of crime is a major factor which has kept families from moving into or encouraged families to move out of sections of Mission Hill. Social and racial changes have occurred in much of Mission Hill and the myths associated with socio-economic and racial change spur many middle class families to leave the area. Typically, areas go through a process of disinvestment well in advance of the new renters/owners and the new groups inherit a housing stock which often is too costly for them to adequately maintain.

5. Presence Of Blighting Influences: The presence of blighting influences such as abandoned housing, dirty vacant lots, deteriorated public housing, objectionable industrial areas and the cleared tracts of land in the Southwest Corridor often discourage investment and can lead to further decline in quality of the district. Abandonment is a particularly important issue in Mission Hill. Often, abandoned buildings are not boarded or demolished quickly enough and tax deliquent properties are not obtained as rapidly as they should be.

6. Institutional Influences: Institutional actions such as land banking and speculation have contributed to residential disinvestment in Mission Hill. The actions of Lahey Clinic and Ruggles Street Baptist Church in the Back of the Hill are the prime examples. Those institutions acquired and demolished over 150 units of housing; they neglected the properties and did not adequately maintain the land once the buildings were demolished. Harvard's purchase of the Ledge Site raised the fear of further institutional expansion and made residents question further residential investments. Additionally, heavy institutional traffic and congestion of residential streets with institutional parkers has contributed to the climate in which residential disinvestment occurs.

Strategies

The strategy to combat residential disinvestment must rest to a great extent upon the participation and the attitudes of the area's residents; rehabilitation incentives, capital improvements, etc., can only play a minimal role unless the neighborhood residents are actively involved and generally perceive that things are going to get better. The presence or establishment of a neighborhood association is an important factor in maintaining positive attitudes and in creating a mechanism whereby the neighborhood can gain a greater degree of control over its own destiny. It is generally acknowledged that if a significant proportion of the neighborhood's residents make a commitment to try and improve the neighborhood, that other residents not initially involved become involved and make greater efforts. Some of the steps that can be taken to reverse residential disinvestment by increasing neighborhood participation, improving the physical quality of the neighborhood and attracting more families and owner occupants are:

1. Ensure Credit Availability: Lending institutions must be encouraged to provide mortgages and home improvement loans to families throughout Mission Hill and the City and community groups should work in concert to ensure this. The requirement by the State Banking Commissioner for disclosure by banks of sources of deposits and mortgage lending patterns and the establishment and working of the Mortgage Review

Board provide opportunities to increase the general availability of credit throughout Mission Hill and should be supported and continued. The City should continue its positive public relations efforts and work with bankers, realtors, appraisers, etc., to make them aware of Mission Hill's attributes.

2. Provide Rehabilitation Incentives: Continuation of the Housing Improvement Program (consisting of counseling, technical assistance and a 20% cash rebate to owner occupants of 1-6 family structures who complete certain housing improvements) will provide the needed incentive to a large portion of Mission Hill. An analysis of the 20% program should be undertaken to determine if major modifications are needed. Continue the 40% HIP program; this program is designed to provide a 40% rebate for replacement of defective systems (i.e., heating and electrical) and repair of major structural defects as a supplement to the 20% rebate for other repair work. The 40% program is designed to restore structures in deteriorated neighborhoods that would not otherwise be repaired with a 20% rebate, encourage major repairs that often precede or sometimes cause residential abandonment and provide a greater leverage of conventional financing. Continue the 50% program; this program provides a 50% rebate to elderly homeowners who complete certain housing improvements. The 20%, 40%, and 50% HIP programs are available throughout Mission Hill.

   The Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services program should continue to be supported and a deep rehab incentive program should be initiated to encourage rehabilitation of abandoned buildings which could be saved.

   Utilization of rental subsidies under the Federal Section 8 Leased Housing Program or the State 707 Leased Housing Program could provide incentives for owners to rehabilitate their housing. Section 8 and 707 provide subsidies to owners renting apartments (that conform to certain housing code standards) to low and moderate income tenants; this subsidy provides a rent line high enough to assure an adequate cash flow to cover the cost of rehabilitation and permit adequate maintenance. Funds available under these programs, however, are very limited and, at present can only play a minor role in the neighborhood's total rehabilitation needs.

   Section 8 subsidies should be used for rehabilitation projects in preference over new construction. The buildings which should receive priority are the vacant apartments along Huntington Avenue between the Riverway and Brigham Circle, the vacant apartments along Wait Street and the RTH housing on Francis Street and Fenwood Road.

3. Emphasize Neighborhood Improvement: Enforcement of occupancy regulations, code enforcement for problem absentee-owned structures, securing or clearance of abandoned buildings, restoration and improvement of vacant lots, transfer of certain City-owned vacant lots to the BRA Open Space Management Program and renovation and modernization of the public housing projects will help to upgrade residential neighborhoods and generate confidence in the future of Mission Hill.

4. Provide New Capital Investment: Reconstruction of streets and sidewalks, repair and replacement of sewer and water systems, improvement of street lighting and capital investment in parks, schools and other public facilities demonstrate continued confidence by the City and, when coupled with other preservation and revitalization programs, can have a significant positive impact on an area. Because of the limited funds available, all near-term capital investments will, of necessity, have to be limited and should be allocated to high priority needs and programmed on a systematic basis. Longer term capital expenditures may need to be considered for replacement of the outmoded Farragut School. Maintenance of parks and playgrounds should be improved, funds should be allocated to improve Parker Hill playground and recreation areas within the Mission Hill Projects, and more frequent police patrols after dark could be utilized to eliminate some of the vandalism that occurs. One way to improve park maintenance may be to place that responsibility on the neighborhood; a pilot program should be established whereby the Parks Department contracts with a recognized community group to provide maintenance for a park or playground which is presently in poor condition. This should increase community involvement with the facility, result in improved maintenance and provide additional jobs for community residents. The Boston Conservation Commission should consider acquiring part of the Quarry site because of its unique natural features.

5. Encourage New Private Investment: The construction of new housing is a vital component in providing for the needs of the district. The Mission Park development, which will provide 775 units of subsidized mixed income housing, is an important accomplishment and will help to stabilize the RTH neighborhood. There are at least two additional locations which could accommodate new housing: (1) the Back of the Hill site owned by Lahey Clinic and Ruggles Street Baptist Church and (2) the Ledge site owned by Harvard University. An application for 125 units of Section 202 elderly housing on the Back of the Hill has recently been approved. New proposals for additional housing should be developed, but, as noted above, rehabilitation projects should receive priority for the limited Section 8 funds available.

6. Initiate Public Relations Efforts: The City should initiate a positive public relations campaign about Mission Hill highlighting the unique attributes and positive accomplishments in the community. Mission Hill businessmen, institutions and other organizations should also be encouraged to undertake positive promotional efforts. These positive efforts can help to promote pride and confidence on the part of current residents and encourage new families to seek housing in Mission Hill.

7. Encourage Historic Preservation: The City and community groups should work closely to identify potentially significant historic structures and develop a realistic program to preserve their distinct qualities. The City of Boston Landmarks Commission should prove helpful in this undertaking.

## B. DECLINE OF BRIGHAM CIRCLE

### Issue

The decline of Brigham Circle is not unusual in the era of "one stop" shopping at large outlying chain stores. The convenience of ample free parking at chain stores and variety of merchandise available in regional shopping centers make these facilities more attractive to those with automobiles. With a loss of clientele to outlying stores, the neighborhood store operator is often faced with diminishing sales and increasing costs. A typical response has been to reduce costs at the expense of service and quality, thereby decreasing the attractiveness of the merchandise to the remaining customers and setting into motion a cycle of decline. However, the convenience of Brigham Circle, especially for the elderly or those without automobiles, requires that it be upgraded and a balance of stores be provided offering the basic goods and services.

Brigham Circle has experienced a number of problems over the past few years including a rising incidence of crime and burglaries, inadequate lighting, severe traffic congestion, poor storefront maintenance and a declining number of customers.

Although it has a low vacancy rate, a central issue is how to make Brigham Circle more competitive with outlying stores so that residents will utilize the shops and services close at hand.

### Strategy

The police foot patrolman program is an important factor in maintaining Brigham Circle's viability and should be continued.

The City's public investment program of new lighting along Tremont Street, foot patrolmen, amenities, and traffic improvements for Huntington Avenue (under TOPICS) must be complemented by an increased effort by the private sector.

A Huntington Avenue improvement program should be provided in future years between Brigham Circle and South Huntington Avenue. It should include plans for major traffic improvements at Brigham Circle and an analysis of whether a grade separated roadway at Brigham Circle is feasible and desirable should be made part of this effort.

The City's strategy should also concentrate on (1) assisting to develop a strong and productive businessmen's association; (2) assisting that association in setting up workshops, conducting market studies, assessing current mixes of stores and attracting new businesses; (3) encouraging merchants to rehabilitate their storefronts with City assistance; and (4) developing guidelines for and encouraging reuse of key parcels such as the Ledge site.

## C. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION

### Issue

The Mission Hill/Medical Center Area has the largest concentration of educational institutions, hospitals, museums and research facilities in the entire Boston region. Over the past ten years, institutional development, particularly by medical institutions, has accelerated and a number of new institutional buildings have been constructed and several additional ones have been proposed. The number of available expansion sites is limited and congestion is increasing. Viewed in the aggregate, the scale of proposed development has a major impact upon the area and has created much apprehension. There is concern by the City and community groups that this growth should not be allowed to adversely impact adjacent residential areas. Other issues of concern are traffic and parking congestion, building height and relationships, general environmental impacts, retention of open space, impact of tax exempt land development and increased demand for municipal services and, in some instances, lack of City control mechanisms and policies for guiding development. The ownership of properties and large tracts of land on Mission Hill (706-712 Huntington Avenue, Francis Street and Fenwood Road properties, the Ledge site, Back of the Hill, etc.) by the institutions was seen as an institutional expansion threat to the residential character of Mission Hill; however, the agreement by the institutions not to expand east of Huntington Avenue, the agreement by Harvard University to work to transfer ownership of the Francis Street and Fenwood Road properties to RTH, the agreement by Harvard University to develop the Ledge site with community participation and according to community needs and the recent agreement with AHC concerning 706-712 Huntington Avenue and other properties all reinforce the concept of a defined institutional perimeter and help to alleviate the threat of institional expansion in the residential sector.

Strategy

The Mayor's policy statement of September, 1970 on medical and educational institutions is still in effect and should be adhered to. Based on this statement, the City should require that any future development or building conversions be accompanied by a master plan for that institution agreed upon by the City. The City's major control is through zoning; however, some modifications to the existing code are necessary. A zoning amendment proposed by FenPAC, making hospitals a conditional use where they are now allowed, was considered by the Zoning Commission and rejected. This proposal should be reinstituted and the City, the community and the institutions should work to ensure its passage. The City should use its zoning powers to guide institutional development and reduce the size of a proposed project, if necessary, and reject a poorly conceived or inadequately planned project. Policies should be developed and enforced concerning land use, limits on development, retention of open space, building heights and relationships and transportation problems. With regard to transportation, a definitive circulation and parking plan should be developed and implemented, public transportation and access to it should be improved, the residential parking sticker program should be more widely utilized and an improved ticketing and towing program should be implemented.

## 3. PROPOSED THREE YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978-1980) AND LONGER-RANGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND OBJECTIVES

The proposed 1978-1980 Neighborhood Improvement Program for Mission Hill is designed to strengthen neighborhood confidence by reinforcing community strengths and improving conditions in declining areas. During the next three years, this program must address Mission Hill's major issues of residential disinvestment, institutional expansion and decline of Brigham Circle.

In preparing recommendations for this proposed program, the fiscal constraints under which Boston operates were taken into account. The City faces serious fiscal problems due to cutbacks in federal and state aid, the inequitable tax structure in Massachusetts, an excessive reliance upon the property tax, limited and high cost bonding capacity and rapidly escalating construction and personnel costs. Due to these problems and the scarcity of available funds, the City must continue to use a variety of resources to implement neighborhood preservation and revitalization efforts and must maximize the use of public investment to leverage private investment.

## RESIDENTIAL DISINVESTMENT

The City's Housing Improvement Program (HIP) and the Neighborhood Services Program (NHS) have had a limited but useful impact in Mission Hill. The HIP and NHS programs should be continued; however, because of the limited impacts they have had, modifications to these programs and new programs designed to deal with problem structures should be developed and funded. The City should also evaluate the need for programs to overcome language and cultural barriers which may inhibit participation of the Spanish population in housing programs and should initiate programs to overcome those barriers.

The demolition and boarding program should be continued. Funds for boarding approximately 24 structures and demolishing approximately 30 hazardous structures should be allocated over the next three years.

In 1975-76, almost $2.5 million was allocated from CD funds for renovations at the Mission Hill Projects and additional funds were allocated for "breakthrough" rehab to combine and enlarge existing units; however, the need for improvement of living conditions is still great. The expenditures in the past years have been extensive, but, generally the improvements have represented a piecemeal approach to the problems in the projects. A comprehensive plan should be jointly completed by the BHA, the tenants, the BRA and the Mayor's Office to outline an overall program for the housing project in the next three years. Funds should then be allocated for housing and recreational facility improvements.

The reconstruction of residential streets and sidewalks, the installation of street lights and street trees and the cleaning and replacement of sewer and water lines play an important part in maintaining neighborhood confidence and in leveraging private investment. An inventory of existing conditions and specific needs on all Mission Hill streets should be completed on the next three years and a phasing plan for improvements developed and implemented. Approximately $1,000,000 should be allocated over the next three years to continue the construction and repair of Mission Hill's public works facilities on a systematic basis.

Recreation facilities in Mission Hill are heavily utilized and need to be regularly maintained and repaired. Funds should be allocated to improve Parker Hill playground. The City should monitor demographic changes and update its facilities to address developing or changing needs.

Major public facilities in Mission Hill such as schools and libraries are old and deteriorating. A thorough evaluation of their useful life, need for repair or replacement and reuse potential should be undertaken in the immediate future. Programs for new construction or renovation should be reflective of these findings and funding allocated for 1979-1980.

Reuse of vacant land in Mission Hill is a need which should be addressed in the next three years. The means for reusing smaller sites include sale to abuttors, private development where appropriate, provi-

sion of parks or tot lots', victory gardens, etc. A study should be prepared to identify these lots and their potential uses and funds allocated in 1979-1980, if necessary. The large sites need extensive planning and new development. The Back of the Hill encompasses 23 acres of vacant land primarily owned by Lahey Clinic and Ruggles Baptist Church. A preliminary development plan for this site has been prepared with extensive community particpation. An earlier BRA review of the Back of the Hill site indicated that a multi-use development, primarily residential, was appropriate and that the Lahey Clinic "bowl" portion at the corner of South Huntington Avenue and Heath Street should be developed initially. A proposal for 125 units of Section 202/8 elderly housing for the "bowl" site has been prepared and submitted to Washington. A less detailed proposal has been submitted for subsidized family units in an adjacent portion of the Lahey property. Full development of the Back of the Hill may require allocation of City funds for infrastructure improvements (streets, sidewalks, sewers, etc.). The Harvard-owned Ledge site with over 7 acres of vacant land, ledge and commercial buildings in Brigham Circle presents a significant multi-use development opportunity. The rock outcroppings and the level area near St. Alphonsus Street should probably be reserved for open space or public use. The lower portion of the site at Brigham Circle should be redeveloped for residential and commercial purposes to strengthen the Brigham Circle commercial area. City funds, if necessary, should be used to purchase the areas to be preserved for open space, recreational or other public uses.

To create public awareness of Mission Hill as a good place to live, shop and raise a family, the City should initiate positive public relations efforts (especially with banks, realtors and other key actors) and funds should be allocated for this effort in 1978-1980. Mission Hill businessmen, institutions and other organizations should be encouraged to undertake positive promotional efforts; the need to establish a program to leverage private funds for this effort should be studied and funds allocated in 1979-1980 if necessary.

## DECLINE OF BRIGHAM CIRCLE

Recent public expenditures for foot patrolmen and lighting have helped to improve Brigham Circle. The footpatrol program has been successful and should be funded for 1978-1980. Funds should be allocated in 1978-1980 for amenities in Brigham Circle and for the RESTORE program so that merchants in Brigham Circle can avail themselves of the 20% cash rebate and technical assistance program for improving their storefronts. Merchant and shopper surveys and market studies should be initiated. A major factor in Brigham Circle's revitalization is the reuse of the Ledge site. The City should assist in reuse studies and closely review all proposals for development. Plans for major traffic improvements at Brigham Circle should be prepared, including an analysis of whether a grade separated roadway at Brigham Circle is feasible and desirable, and funds allocated during 1978-1980.

## INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION

The strategies designed to deal with instititional expansion are primarily concerned with setting policies and exerting controls and do not require specific expenditures. However, funds should be allocated for an automobile towing program designed to service those neighborhoods most severely impacted by institutional parkers. Funds should also be allocated for street improvements in the medical area designed to alleviate congestion and undesirable impacts, but only if the land necessary is given to the City with no damage asked and only where it is infeasible for the institutions involved to construct the improvements.

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Robert L. Farrell, Chairman
Joseph J. Walsh, Vice Chairman
James G. Colbert, Treasurer
James K. Flaherty, Assistant Treasurer
James E. Cofield, Jr., Member
Kane Simonian, Secretary
Robert F. Walsh, Director

Roy Bishop, Director, Neighborhood Planning Program
Ronald Nayler, Mission Hill Medical Center Area Neighborhood Planner

# 4. MISSION HILL-FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1977 Investment Program

| ISSUE | STRATEGY | 1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM | PROPOSED 1978-1980 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. Residential Disinvestment | | | |
| A. Restrictions on mortgage & home improvement loans availability | Increase and stabilize neighborhood mortgage and home improvement assistance. | | |
| | Provide rehabilitation incentives | 20%-40%-50% HIP Program - $60,000<br>NHS - $40,000 | Continue 20,40,50% HIP<br>Provide Section 8 & Section 707 subsidies<br>Continue evaluation of HIP Program |
| B. Presence of blighting influences | Securing or clearance of abandoned buildings | Clearance of abandoned, unsafe & dangerous buildings - $45,000<br>Securing of vacant buildings for future rehabilitation - $10,000 | Clearance of 45 additional abandoned buildings.<br>Securing of 30 additional abandoned buildings. |
| | Rehabilitation of abandoned buildings. | | Provide Section 8 subsidies |
| | Restoration and improvement of vacant lots in residential areas. | | Restoration/improvement of 45 additional vacant lots. Market vacant parcels. |
| | Hold sizeable and/or important city-owned vacant areas for future sale or development; transfer these vacant lots to the BRA Open Space Management Program. | | Allocation of funds for Open Space Management Program. Develop long range reuse plan. |
| | Rehabilitation of public housing | | Renovation & modernization of public housing units & overall environment at Mission Hill Main & extension.<br>Improvements to recreation areas |
| | Code enforcement of problem buildings | | Provide staff support for code enforcement program. |
| C. Need for Capital Improvements | Capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhood | Street trees - $5,000<br>Residential street lighting-$196,500<br>Residential street reconstruction-$39,600<br>Residential sidewalk reconstruction-$57,750 | New street & sidewalk reconstruction, street lighting, street trees, sewer & water line improvements.<br>Coordination of various City programs for maximum impact |
| | Improve parks and playgrounds | | Improvements at Parker Hill Playground<br>Improve maintenance. |
| D. Need for new housing | Encourage private development | Back of the Hill consultant studies - $20,000 | Back of the Hill; Ledge site |
| E. Illegal Occupancy | Enforce action program for resolution of cases | | |
| F. Misunderstanding & misrepresentation of the neighborhood | Initiate positive public relations efforts | Innovative Grant | Funding for public relations efforts. |
| II. Commercial Center Decline | Maintain police footpatrols in commercial centers | Footpatrolmen at Brigham Circle - $42,600 | Provide funding for continuation of footpatrolmen; extend limits of coverage |
| | Improve lighting | | |
| | Enforce parking regulations | | |
| | Reduce traffic congestion | | Urban Systems Projects, planning for Phase III Huntington Avenue improvements. |
| | Stimulate/attract new business | | |
| | Reuse key parcels Ledge Site | | Preparation of planning analysis; acquisition of portions of site if necessary. |
| | Strengthen businessmen's associations | | |
| | Develop plans for pedestrian improvements | | Provide amenities |
| | Encourage storefront rehab | | RESTORE - Storefront Improvement Program |
| | Market study to direct revitalization efforts | | Conduct market study; assess current mix of stores |
| III. Institutional Expansion | | | |
| A. Lack of Master Plans | Require future development proposals to be accompanied by Master Plan prepared by institution | | |
| B. Traffic Congestion | Develop transportation plan & institute necessary improvements | | Develop definitive circulation and parking plan; implement necessary improvements, particularly Longwood & Brookline Ave. widenings |
| C. Illegal Parking | Utilize & enforce resident parking sticker program; improve ticketing & towing program. | | Provide funding for necessary personnel & equipment to improve ticketing & towing of illegally parked vehicles. |
| D. Need to guide development | Develop and utilize city polices to guide development | | Develop policies on land use, limits of development, retention of open space & building heights and relationships. |
| | Modify zoning code where necessary | | Support passage of zoning amendment to make hospitals conditional uses where now allowed. |
| | Utilize existing zoning powers to guide development. | | |